CLAIMS:

1.   A server-based system for a fabricator evaluating a request for a proposal to view a part design model, comprising:

5   a memory for storing a part design model provided by a designer seeking a proposal for manufacturing the part represented by the part design model;

a server system for enabling a fabricator connected over a packet-switched network to access said part design model;

said server system having a software component for presenting the part design
10   model to the fabricator through said network using a graphical user interface.

2.   The server based system of claim 1, wherein said software component includes a substantially platform independent client side application to be run on the user system of the fabricator.

3.   The server based system of claim 2, wherein said application permits the
15   manipulation of the part design model.

4.   The server based system of claim 3, wherein said manipulation comprises one or more of rotation, translation, two-dimensional cutting and a fly-through.

5.   The server based system of claim 3, wherein said manipulation comprises the presentation of the part design model as a higher fidelity graphical representation.

20   6.   The server based system of claim 1, wherein the part design model comprises a plurality of features which are linked by the server system with specifications or standards.

7.   The server based system of claim 6, wherein said software component further provides for the fabricator to select a specific feature in order to view an associated specification or standard.

8.   The server based system of claim 7, wherein the selection is performed using a mouse device.

9.   The server based system of claim 1, wherein said server system is further adapted to receive from the designer said request for a proposal.

10.   The server based system of claim 9, wherein said proposal further includes information of the identity of a plurality of fabricators permitted to access said request.

11.   The server based system of claim 9, wherein said proposal includes at least a portion of the part design model.

12.   The server based system of claim 9, wherein said part design model was stored in said memory at a time before submission of said proposal.

13.   The server based system of claim 9, wherein server system is further adapted to receive from the fabricator a bid in response to said request for a proposal.

14.   The server based system of claim 1, wherein said software component further enables the fabricator and the designer to engage in a communications session that is substantially real-time.

15.   The server based system of claim 14, wherein said communications session comprises one or more of audio and video.

16.   The server based system of claim 14, wherein said communications session comprises the simultaneous presentation of the part design model to the fabricator and the designer.

17.   The server based system of claim 16, wherein the simultaneous presentation includes the manipulation of the part design model.

18.   The server based system of claim 1, wherein the part design model is uploaded by

5   the designer using a substantially platform independent application provided by the server for transmitting the part design model as a data compressed file.